

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN
SOUTHERN DIVISION**

In re FLINT WATER CASES

Case No. 5:16-cv-10444-JEL-MKM
(consolidated)

Hon. Judith E. Levy
Mag. Mona K. Majzoub

**APPLICATION FOR REAPPOINTMENT AS
INTERIM CO-LEAD CLASS COUNSEL**

Theodore Leopold of Cohen Milstein Sellers & Toll PLLC and Michael Pitt of Pitt McGehee Palmer & Rivers PC remain uniquely qualified to serve as Interim Co-Lead Class Counsel. Since their reappointment last year, Interim Co-Lead Class Counsel have continued to vigorously and effectively prosecute this action. As a result of their experience, resources, and well-developed knowledge of the factual record, legal issues, and status of critical negotiations related to discovery and settlement, they remain best positioned to bring the case to a swift and just conclusion.

Legal Standard

Federal courts rely on the same factors to appoint interim and final class counsel:

(i) the work counsel has done in identifying or investigating potential claims in the action; (ii) counsel's experience in handling class actions, other complex litigation, and the types of claims asserted in the action; (iii) counsel's knowledge of the applicable law; and (iv) the resources that counsel will commit to representing the class

Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(g)(1)(A). The Court "may also consider other matter[s] pertinent to counsel's ability to fairly and adequately represent the interests of the class." *In re Delphi ERISA Litig.*, 230 F.R.D. 496, 498 (E.D. Mich. 2005); *accord* Fed. R. Civ.

P. 23(g)(1)(B). Weighing all the relevant considerations, it is clear that Mr. Leopold and Mr. Pitt are in the best position to lead this case.¹

I. The Rule 23(g)(1)(A) Factors Support Mr. Leopold's and Mr. Pitt's Continued Leadership

Identifying and Investigating Claims. Over the past year, Messrs. Leopold and Pitt, together with attorneys on the Plaintiffs' Executive Committee (PEC)² and under their leadership, have continued to investigate the claims in this case, marching quickly and efficiently through fact discovery. In the past year, the class leadership team has:

- Negotiated document custodians and search terms, and ultimately obtained and reviewed hundreds of thousands of Defendants' documents;
- Used subpoenas to collect and review documents from third parties;
- Collected and reviewed class representatives' documents;
- Taken eight depositions and prepared for several more in December and January;
- Defended six depositions;
- Worked with experts; and

¹ This Application incorporates Mr. Leopold's and Mr. Pitt's earlier leadership applications by reference, *see generally* ECF Nos. 136, 690, and focuses on their accomplishments since the Court renewed their standing as Interim Co-Lead Class Counsel on December 7, 2018, *see* ECF No. 696.

² The case has benefitted tremendously from Interim Co-Lead Class Counsel's relationships with and the contributions of the PEC: Paul Novak, Teresa Bingman, Esther Berezofsky, Peretz Bronstein, and Steve Morrissey.

- Met and conferred repeatedly with Defendants to ensure that discovery proceeds as smoothly as possible.

Counsel's Experience. In recognition of Mr. Leopold's experience litigating environmental cases successfully, Cohen Milstein was declared a "Winner – Elite Trial Lawyers – Environmental Protection" by the National Law Journal in 2019.³

Counsel's Knowledge of the Law. Over the past year, Messrs. Leopold and Pitt further demonstrated their understanding of the governing law by leading a team of lawyers to (among other things):

- Successfully oppose Defendants' motion to strike class allegations;
- Litigate appeals of the Court's motion to dismiss decisions in the Sixth Circuit; and
- Craft a class certification strategy and gather the discovery necessary to implement it.

Counsel's Resources. Messrs. Leopold and Pitt stand ready to contribute both their unparalleled institutional knowledge, time, and monetary resources to prosecute this action. Because Messrs. Leopold and Pitt have been leading the class litigation for several years, they are keenly familiar with the details and unique dynamics of this case. That institutional knowledge will be invaluable to the class in further litigation and settlement discussions. In addition, Interim Co-Lead Class

³ Lisa Helem, *The 2019 Elite Trial Lawyers: Our Winners*, National Law Journal (July 23, 2019), <https://www.law.com/nationallawjournal/2019/07/23/the-2019-elite-trial-lawyers-our-winners/>.

Counsel and the PEC have established a litigation fund to ensure that the case has adequate monetary resources. Complex class actions such as this require substantial expert analysis and discovery (in addition to costs associated with mediation and the Special Master). Messrs. Leopold and Pitt and the PEC have already made substantial payments to the litigation fund, and they are ready and willing to make additional contributions to obtain justice for Flint residents.

II. Other Factors Support Mr. Leopold's and Mr. Pitt's Continued Leadership

Several additional considerations militate in favor of Mr. Leopold's and Mr. Pitt's continued leadership. *See In re Delphi ERISA Litig.*, 230 F.R.D. at 498 (explaining that, in appointing lead counsel, courts may consider “matter[s] pertinent to counsel's ability to fairly and adequately represent the interests of the class”); *accord* Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(g)(1)(B). First, as this Court has recognized at several status conferences, the parties and the community have an interest in moving expeditiously through this litigation. Because Messrs. Leopold and Pitt and the PEC have already crafted a long-term legal strategy—and largely implemented it—they are best positioned to move forward with discovery and class certification.

Second, Messrs. Leopold and Pitt have made significant progress in settlement negotiations. Under their leadership, Class Plaintiffs have:

- Submitted multiple detailed mediation statements and provided updates to the mediators when discovery revealed significant new evidence;

- Successfully moved for the appointment of Subclass Settlement Counsel (SCC) to ensure that any settlement funds are allocated fairly; and
- Worked diligently to familiarize SCC with the details of this case.

Because Interim Co-Lead Class Counsel are deeply involved in intricate, fast-moving, resource-intensive settlement talks, a change in class leadership at this juncture could cause significant delays in the settlement process.

Finally, Messrs. Leopold and Pitt have established productive working relationships with other attorneys and Flint residents. Since this case began, Interim Co-Lead Class Counsel have worked closely with the PEC and with plaintiffs' lawyers in the related actions to ensure that litigation runs as smoothly as possible. Likewise, Interim Co-Lead Class Counsel has developed relationships with defense counsel that will serve them in future negotiations. Finally, Mr. Pitt and several other attorneys working under the current class leadership structure—a diverse team that includes Flint residents with deep ties to the community—have engaged leaders and advocacy groups in Flint to work with the community.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, Class Plaintiffs respectfully request that the Court reappoint Theodore Leopold and Michael Pitt as Interim Co-Lead Class Counsel.

Dated: December 18, 2019

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Theodore J. Leopold

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

The undersigned certifies that the foregoing instrument was filed with the U.S. District Court through the ECF filing system and that all parties to the above case were served via the ECF filing system on December 18, 2019.

Dated: December 18, 2019

/s/ Emmy L. Levens

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